







EASTER ANGELS.



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MARY HENDERSON EASTMAN.

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OH! early autumn time; oh! golden eve,
Whose leaves all tremble at the south wind's breath,
That, on some sweet and solemn errand bent,
No summer flower touched with hue of death.
Never such fragrance from our roses fell
As, on that day, when, ere from earth had fled
The sunset's glory, the sweet air gave back
The echo of a stately angel's tread.

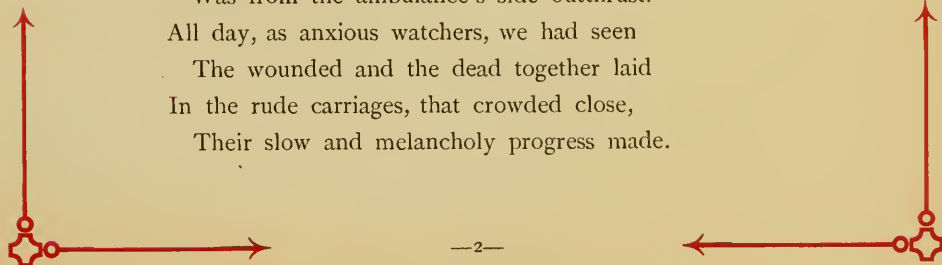
We saw him not, yet to his breast was clasped
A little one, that, in her loveliness,
He laid beside her mother's heart, and stood
Lingering a moment there to gaze and bless.
The babe, whose eyes had won the violet's blue,
Looked up to meet her guardian's smile benign,
Then saw depart the shining wings that tracked,
Through twilight to the stars, their path divine.



EASTER ANGELS.

Swift he escaped from the dull battle cries
That came from Antietam's red groaning plain,
And, as he entered Heaven, he could see
The quivering moonbeams play upon the slain,—
Could see, perchance, strong spirits, like himself,
Bending by death, as he had bent o'er life,—
Bending to smile and bless, and bear away
Young heroes' souls from scenes of blood and strife.

Alas! our very streets were blocked with woe.
The sun's fierce rays beat on our paths of dust,
While here and there a limb all pale and cold
Was from the ambulance's side outthrust.
All day, as anxious watchers, we had seen
The wounded and the dead together laid
In the rude carriages, that crowded close,
Their slow and melancholy progress made.







EASTER ANGELS.

“Our hospitals are full!” In vain ’twas said.

“Make room for us,” the dying patriots sighed.
And ranged upon our pavements, for a bed,
How patient many a soldier wept and died.
And we, too, wept; though ours were tears of joy
That over us, the breezes flitting by,
Bore joyous peals, that still our flag’s fair folds
Waved o’er the babe, amid their harmony.

We bore our darling to the mountain’s side.
Our souls with shadows dark were bowed.

For one,
Faint from the toil of battle, still looked up
To life and love, as flowers to the sun.
We prayed the north winds for their breath, the pines
For the strong life that kept them ever green;
We envied every mossy flower that smiled
Unblighted, the gray, rocky paths between.





EASTER ANGELS.

Our babe in beauty grew; her little hands,
White as the sea-fowl's wing, were outstretched oft
To feed the snow-birds that her bread crumbs pecked,
Or beckon them, with laugh and cooing soft;
And as they to the mountain's breast flew back,
A mist would gather o'er her lovely eyes,
But, with the promise they would soon return,
Flushed on her cheek the light of sunset skies.

The summer birds, how much they loved her too!
She clapped her hands, delighted, as they sung.
For I remember well one wild bird's note—
So loud and joyous his sweet carol rung,
Seeing her watch him on the boughs above.
I thought it very strange such love of song
(A love that now I know the angels gave)
Could ever to a baby's heart belong.

Her trembling eyelids drooped, when, through the air,
A funeral march gave notice of the train
That followed the dead soldier, to a rest
No reveillé might e'er disturb again;
But, when returning, some gay air was played,—
Oh, Christ! I thank Thee that my darling hears
No more sad music, and that never more
Can those blue, radiant eyes be sad with tears.

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The Mississippi's banks with splendor gleamed
On waves that flowed towards the unquiet sea.
The ripened corn waved in the valleys green,
And bright with wild flowers hill and prairie.
I held our baby in a close embrace,
Watching a languor her fair features o'er;
She kissed me with her crimsoned lips and said,
"I am so tired—sing me to sleep once more."





EASTER ANGELS.

No voice, no strength had I, but that which came
From the white angels standing by my side;
I sang, "Oh! Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let us in Thee our tears, our sorrows hide;"
And afterwards, "Lie still and slumber, dear,
God's holy, loving angels guard thee now."
How sweet her smile!

But one beside her wept,
And pressed his lips upon her cheek and brow.

And this the angels saw, for oft I've thought
They whispered low together—yes, I heard
One say, "Not long apart their souls shall be."
Yes, often have I thought I heard this word.
Still, still I sang: "We stand on Jordan's strand;
Our friends are passing over, and we see
Almost the shining shore."

Death's dew on cheek
And brow; she nestled lovingly to me.





EASTER ANGELS.

Afar the gates of Paradise unclose,
A swift-descending angel clouds divides;
(Was it the one who brought our babe that eve
Along the paths where the red rose abides?)
The light fell o'er her from his shining wings,—
Wooing her eyes to catch his smile benign,
He drew her to his strong and loving breast,
And rising, upward traced his path divine.

Silent, we clasped the lovely form we held,
Wet with our tears the eyelids cool and fair;
Kissed lip, and cheek, and brow, and hand—Oh! God!—
And still an angel sorrowed with us there.
Sorrowed, and watched and solaced one, who soon
Tired of the long nights' weariness and pain;
Tired of the days without our little one,
Longing to hold her to his heart again.

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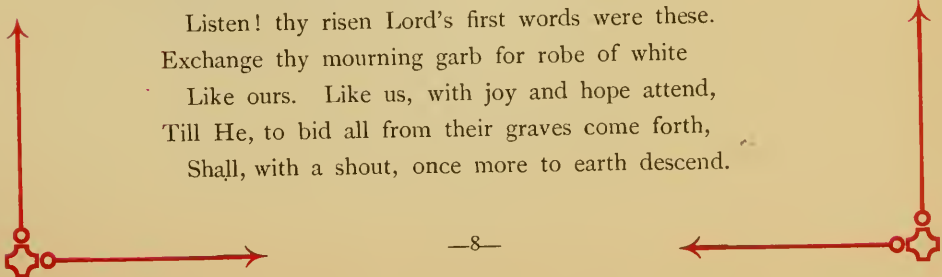
EASTER ANGELS.

The autumn came, and one sweet day, at eve,
The sunset lingered on his flushing cheek.
He looks upon us, as we gather round,
His farewell glances naught of terror speak.
He listens to the prayers the Church ordains,
Prayers for the dying—

And, again, we gave
To angel charge one loving and beloved,
And by our baby's is another grave.

“Why weepst thou?” The Easter Angels say,
“We watch their sleeping, as we watched by His,
Whose voice beloved said, “Why weepst thou?”

Listen! thy risen Lord's first words were these.
Exchange thy mourning garb for robe of white
Like ours. Like us, with joy and hope attend,
Till He, to bid all from their graves come forth,
Shall, with a shout, once more to earth descend.







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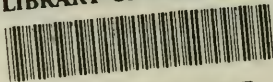


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